

**AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF
TRANSFORMATION OF STREETS INTO HIGHWAYS ON
TOWN EXPERIENCE AND IMAGIABILITY OF THE
CITY**

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Department of Architecture of the
University of Moratuwa in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of



Master of Science

In

Architecture

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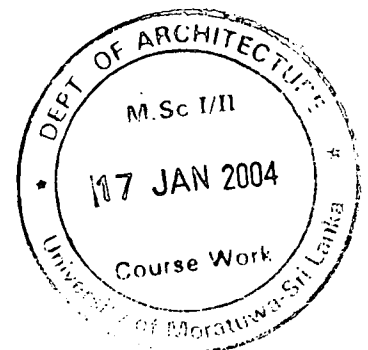
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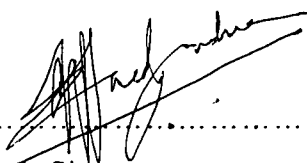


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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.



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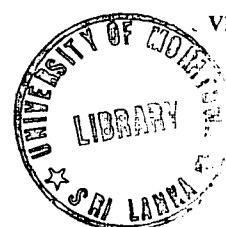
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ABSTRACT

The experiencing of a town has a great effect on people in understanding the environment, which he or she passes on a journey. It makes the observer saturated with memories and makes the journey more meaningful.

With the advent of new technology the journey that people experienced in the past are no more. The prime objective of a journey has converted from a pleasant experience through the environment, to a time saving voyage from one place to another.

This phenomenon has drastically altered our built-environment disregarding the values and identities of different regions. It has resulted in altering of a mental image of people towards a particular city.



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When cities and towns along a travel route losses its image, the traveler is exposed to a dull and a monotonous movement through the space without evoking feelings or emotions, which would have helped to make the journey more consequential.

The travel route, which was a street from the early times, is gradually converting into highways, which are capable of efficient and smooth transit. The transit had made its way through sacrificing the identity and the character, which was previously preserved in the built fabric of the street.



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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

- **Background to the Study - Observation**

The urban growth, transforming rural landscapes in to sub-urban and urban areas has significantly changed our living environment. Growth of cities expanding its boundaries in to rural areas had distorted the rural landscape. This urban sprawl is distinctively apparent through the arteries of the city or a town, which spreads through to the countryside, which are streets and high ways.

“A city however, perfect in its initial shape is never complete, never at rest” (Kostof, 1991: 13).

The city is described as an organism, which grows and expands through decades and centuries. These changes are due to the increasing urban population and every city has to accommodate this need.

A city or a town has a special inherent character embedded in it due to various aspects of the human civilization and the physical character of the region. This character is formed by the human who comes to live on it, the society formed by him and with built fabric that accommodates the society. Hence this character is reflected in the various components of the city or the town.

This character and the identity are crucial in experiencing a city or a town. Character, in simple sense, could be defined as a special quality of an entity which gives it identity; its uniqueness. Character, is taken in the sense that a particular entity, place or a person is essentially different from

another of the same kind. Each of these entities contains its own collective styles, which contributes to enhance to its uniqueness.

For instance, if a person is taken as an example, his physical appearance, his behavior, his reaction to various situations - all these aspects contribute to his uniqueness. It could further be said, that not only these aspects should contribute, but also should be intensify towards a single idea for that person to acquire strong character and thereby identity. Components of character can be identified to be composition, texture and stance; that is to say an entity gains character through its composition texture and stance. Regarding in this manner these factors have an immense effect on the physical entities of a landscape or a city. People perceive cities or landscapes mainly by recognizing routes, while traveling on them and by streets, and highways, which give access to them and by means of landmarks to orient themselves inside the larger context or in simple terms people identify and remember certain elements of a city to clarify their position or progression.

Along a street or a highway, which runs through several distinctly identifiable towns or cities, different characters are stored in each portion of its length to experience. In more simple terms people identify or experience a journey by the **visual analysis** of these components. It is the sole reason that a journey would be a **spatial experience**, which is undergone by the traveller. This spatial experience keeps the human saturated with memories and understandings about their journey.

In the reason times the meaningful journey through different spaces which helps to perceive the character of the town has been challenged by the transformation of streets into more efficient highways.

- **Importance of the Study - Criticality**

The criticality of this study is immersed with the necessity for development and with it, retaining the nature of place. The experience of a city or a town is decisive in the process of spatial progression. Any traveller who is familiar with his surroundings naturally analyses the path and establish his orientation. This was possible through understanding the character; identity and thereby image of a city.

Architecture is the main component, which creates the image of each city with the aid of different physical and natural landmarks. It creates experiencing of a city more memorable. With the need for accommodation for more people and resources the cities together with its highways expand out of its bounds. Especially in this study the changes, which occur to the experiencing of a city or a town caused by the expansion of streets into highways is taken into consideration. This factor is essential in the sense that it will distort the whole experience and the spatial progression of a city and their character.

As described the components of character in the built environment is severely affected by the new development concepts of high-speed ways and other development, which follows it.

Therefore it is necessary to investigate the possible means to minimize the impact of the above-mentioned development of highways.



- **Intention of the Study**

The intention of the study would be to understand the effects of transformation of streets into highways and its effect on experiencing of a city.

The creation of new highways has been a main topic in the current affairs of the country. The highways design mainly focuses its attention on physical components; such would be the shortest distance between two places or passing a town as quickly as possible. This has resulted in expanding of existing streets to accommodate new traffic and straightening of highways. In the local context the term highway refers to a street, which has two or three lanes in each direction and full-blooded highways are yet to emerge in the country, but the critical phenomena is the conversion of streets into broader streets which could accommodate more traffic with increased speed is referred to as a “highway”.

The study intends to find effects, which has been caused by this phenomenon to the experiencing of a city.

- **Objectives of the Study**

One of the main objectives of the study will be to understand the impact, which the transforming street has on the built environment and the study will focus on to the designing of highways by accompanying the architecture and the built-environment. To establish the significance of experiencing of a city with its imagiability and how a city becomes

adapted and turn into existential space through means of landmarks and road networks- streetscape.

Rules and regulations are formulated to maintain a discipline in the built environment. But they only govern the physical parameters of a building or streetscape and thus far, the emotional intent if specifically stating the retaining of character or an identity does not take in to consideration. This happening has resulted dull streetscapes, which has neither character nor an identity.

Another objective will be to establish the vitalness of spatial progression in experiencing a town or a city.

- **Scope and Limitations**



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The study runs through the areas of highway design and the imagiability and with it the experiencing of a city. The imagiability and the experience of the city depend from its character, which is enhanced by landmarks, and other physical and natural elements.

The study will limit to highways and streets, which are components of urban areas, and the characters of various places could be studied to identify its design potential. How the urban growth effected on its existing situation. This is important because it will help to recognize predominant character, which comes out forward over the others.

The study will be narrow down to an area which urban transformation has affected because it will be difficult to cope with the variety of places and

to study their varying character. The study area will cover the basic physical elements, which are considered when designing, and constructing highways and streets. From this basic frame work the architectural component is extracted to identify the weaknesses and potentials.

It would help to understand the different characters and identities of different portions of a street or a highway.

A Street or a highway, which has retained character in different portions in different proportions, will be studied as model. The other examples will be discussed based on its results. It is not wise to say that characters would be similar in nature, but they would have some sort of a parameter, which will be helpful to identify a similarity.

- **Methodology**



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In this study, the methodology will be a **comparative study** accompanying streets, which have, retain character and streets, that has become highways by means of expansions, and providing by-passes to the city. Components, which establish the character, will have to be identified at the initial stage. These factors will be the guidelines for the future study.

The components of such character will be classified as physical, natural and cultural for the understanding of the basic framework.

In more technical words to get knowledge in reality of traffic planning basic highway surveys and their methodology will be studied, based on the

technical data an architectural intent will be added discussing the importance of place making.

Various case study, at necessary stages will be done influencing from international examples because it is difficult to classify and identify the highway, which functions as a highway in Sri Lanka.

The idea of highways is a vastly debated topic in the present day. The Southern Highway is the mostly discussed project the government is trying to implement. Various environmental issues and social issues are converse immensely through the media, but the amount or the extent of attention focused on architecture is seems to be none. This is the primarily reason for the selection of this study area for the establishment of the vitality of architecture in traffic and highway planning.



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